

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### 2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** WA State Department of Ecology

**Application ID:** 13ES145243

**Program Name:** Washington Conservation Corps

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

#### Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The applicant provided numerous, meaningful citations of local, Washington state data. This evidence included the number of natural disasters in the state and country to which its Members assisted in the past, the number of counties in the state suffering from unemployment rates at or above the national average, state unemployment rates for young adults and military veterans, and others. All of this information, combined, documented a compelling community need assertion by the applicant and supported the applicant's reasons for selecting the young adult and veteran populations to serve with employment assistance services.

(+) The applicant considers a high unemployment rate especially among youth and veterans that peaks at 30% as another major concern and to underscore the severity of needs in the state. The applicant is offering stipends to youth and veterans as part of the measures to combat the high unemployment rate and this token gesture is persuasive and strengthens the need.

(+) The applicant provided data gathered by an external evaluator to support its successful environmental interventions, stating that 92% of its past restoration efforts were fully self-sustaining after three years, with the remainder of sites rated as on their way to self-sustainment. This was persuasive evidence to support the applicant's ability to effect the grand overall change proposed, as well as validation for the large number of Members requested.

(+) The applicant explained how targets for the number of Member-earned disaster certifications and the number of disasters responded to were developed. The disaster services targets are aligned with the corresponding focus area and identified need.

(-) The applicant inadequately defined the target community. The proposal stated that the target community included 16 counties in Washington and national federal disaster-declared regions. However, the applicant did not specify the state's counties nor did it address whether they were economically disadvantaged, other than a reference to collaborating with agencies in "resource-poor" areas further on in the proposal. This limited definition slightly weakened the strength of the overall needs assessment section.

- (-) Establishing a connection with nonprofit organizations is commendable, however, the applicant fails to describe in detail what the 20 nonprofit organizations will be doing that are relevant and consistent with the overall goal of the AmeriCorps initiatives.
- (-) The applicant did not clearly explain what types of environmental education activities Members would conduct, to what populations (youth or adults) and in what locations or community medium (i.e., schools, or other organizations). The proposal also only briefly addressed the connection between environmental education and volunteer engagement, stating that these activities cause the public to enjoy natural areas and make investments to protect them, without providing any additional information to support this general statement.
- (-) The applicant did not clearly state that all of its requested Members would occupy full-time slots. Additionally, with a request of such a large number of Members (250), the proposal lacked detail as to why so many Members are required for the proposed service, the seasons of service for Members (if any), specifics about placement locations, or additional information that might support the overall program design of 230 crew Members and 20 Individual Placement Members.
- (-) The applicant did not address how it will measure and report the program's impact on an annual basis. This is significant given the large number of requested Members.